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NASA Procedural Requirements

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Subject: NASA Awards and Recognition Program

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| [TOC](#) | [Preface](#) | [Chapter1](#) | [Chapter2](#) | [Chapter3](#) | [Chapter4](#) | [Chapter5](#) |
[Chapter6](#) | [AppendixA](#) | [AppendixB](#) | [ALL](#) |

Chapter 2. Awards Based on Performance

2.1 Background

2.1.1 In addition to an annual performance award, an employee may be rewarded with a Special Act or Service Award or a TOA in recognition of a specific achievement or contribution.

2.1.2 When an award is approved for an employee of another NASA Center, the nominating Center shall make arrangements to transfer funds to the employee's home Center to cover the award (including the employer's portion of the payroll taxes). If the administrative costs of transferring funds would exceed the amount of the award, the employee's home Center shall absorb the award cost and pay the award. Administrative costs must be clearly stated. This would also apply to another Federal agency giving a NASA employee an award.

2.1.3 When processing monetary or TOAs in NAAS, at least two individuals (one being the Center Awards Officer) must be included in the nomination/approval process to provide the necessary checks and balances.

2.2 Performance Award

2.2.1 Definition

A performance award is a lump-sum cash and/or TOA based on a rating of record of Fully Successful or higher. Refer to NPR 3430.1, Employees Performance Communication System, Chapter 5, subparagraph 5.8, Award Eligibility, for further requirements regarding performance awards.

2.2.2 Eligibility

2.2.2.1 An employee in a GS or FWS position with a rating of record of Fully Successful or higher on the last day of the appraisal period is eligible for a performance award.

2.2.2.2 An employee who serves less than the full appraisal period under a performance plan (i.e., a new employee or a current employee who was on extended sick leave or leave without pay) may receive a reduced, prorated award.

2.2.2.3 Members of the SES are eligible for performance awards in accordance with NPR 3435.1, NASA Performance Management Plan for the Senior Executive Service.

2.2.3 Requirements

2.2.3.1 The amount of the award must be linked to an employee's performance and be based upon the summary performance rating level.

2.2.3.2 An employee may be rewarded with cash, time off, or a combination of cash and time off. An employee with a higher performance summary rating level (e.g., Distinguished) must receive a greater monetary performance award (including combined monetary and time off), based on a percentage of salary, than an employee with a lower performance summary rating level (e.g., Accomplished).

2.2.3.3 The narrative summary that documents the overall performance of the employee shall serve as justification for a performance award.

2.2.3.4 When granting an award paid as a percentage of basic pay, the rate of basic pay used must include any applicable locality payment.

2.2.4 Restrictions

2.2.4.1 Only one performance award may be granted based on any one rating of record.

2.2.4.2 A maximum of ten percent of basic pay may be awarded under usual circumstances. In the case of unusual outstanding performance, awards over ten percent and up to 20 percent of basic pay must be approved by the Administrator (e.g., for outstanding leadership in a significant, high-visibility, project/program).

2.2.4.3 An award over \$10,000, regardless of the percentage, must be submitted through the Office of Human Capital Management to be forwarded to the Office of Personnel Management for approval.

2.2.4.4 Awards in excess of \$25,000, regardless of the percentage, require Presidential approval.

2.2.4.5 The Internal Revenue Service has ruled that a cash award is part of an employee's wages; therefore, taxes will be withheld from the award payment.

2.2.4.6 Any performance award must be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.3 Quality Step Increase (QSI)

2.3.1 Definition

2.3.1.1 A QSI is a faster-than-normal within-grade increase (WGI) to an employee's rate of basic pay given in recognition of and to reward an employee for sustained performance of high quality.

2.3.1.2 A QSI maybe granted to an employee who has received a rating of record of Distinguished.

2.3.1.3 A QSI produces higher, long-term costs to the Agency than other types of awards and shall be considered the highest monetary performance award an employee can receive.

2.3.2 Eligibility

2.3.2.1 A QSI is not required, but may be granted to a GS employee who receives a performance summary rating of Distinguished in accordance with 5 C.F.R. § 531.504.

2.3.2.2. Career SES members and FWS employees are not eligible to receive a QSI.

2.3.3 Requirements

2.3.3.1 A QSI must be effected within 120 calendar days following the end of the appraisal period. No QSI may be effected more than 120 days after the end of the appraisal period on which the Distinguished rating was based.

2.3.3.2 A QSI does not affect the timing of an employee's next regular WGI unless the QSI places the employee in step 4 or step 7 of his or her grade. In these cases, the waiting period is extended an additional 52 weeks.

2.3.3.3 A QSI may be granted as long as the employee has not received a QSI during the past 52 weeks.

2.3.3.4 A QSI may be granted as long as the employee has not reached the maximum step of his/her grade.

2.3.3.5 When a QSI is granted, no other award (monetary, i.e., lump-sum cash, and/or nonmonetary, i.e., time-off) shall be given in conjunction with a QSI.

2.3.3.6 QSI awards must be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.3.3.7 Unlike other awards, QSI awards must be processed as a personnel action in order to affect the award.

2.4 Special Act or Service Award

2.4.1 Definition

A Special Act or Service Award is a lump-sum cash award given in recognition of a specific accomplishment and to reward an employee's performance that has exceeded expectations as a one-time occurrence (e.g., significant contribution in support of a program and/or project).

2.4.2 Eligibility

2.4.2.1 All civil service employees, individually or as a group, are eligible to receive a Special Act or Service Award.

2.4.2.2 Special Act or Service Awards are not based upon an employee's performance rating of record or a particular appraisal period.

2.4.2.3 An individual or group, a former employee, an employee of another Government

agency, or the estate of a deceased employee is eligible for a Special Act or Service Award, provided the achievement took place while the person was a Government employee.

2.4.2.4 A Special Act or Service Award may be granted to members of the Armed Forces, but only in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Department of Defense.

2.4.3 Requirements

2.4.3.1 A Special Act or Service Award must be supported by written justification other than what is documented in the employee's most recent rating of record.

2.4.3.2 Approval at a management level higher than the individual who recommended the award is required.

2.4.3.3 Approval is required for an SES employee by the Center Director for an award not exceeding \$10,000.

2.4.3.4 Approval is required for a GS and FWS employee by the Center Director for an award of \$7,500-\$10,000.

2.4.3.5 Special Act or Service Award nominations are to be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.5 On-the-Spot Award (OTS)

2.5.1 Definition

A kind of special act or service award that may be monetary or non-monetary involving minimal paperwork and approval time in order to provide immediate recognition for employees who perform short-term quality acts or service in an exceptional manner that otherwise might go unrecognized. Examples include:

- a. Performing high-quality work under tight deadlines.
- b. Performing emergency tasks in addition to regular duties.
- c. Exercising extraordinary initiative or creativity in addressing a critical need or difficult problem.

2.5.2 Eligibility

2.5.2.1 An employee in a GS or FWS position is eligible to receive an OTS Award.

2.5.2.2 A customer, peer, or supervisor may recommend an employee for an OTS Award, but it is the responsibility of the supervisor or manager of the employee to approve the award (monetary or non-monetary).

2.5.2.3 Career and non-career SES members are not eligible to receive an OTS Award.

2.5.3 Requirements

2.5.3.1 An OTS Award must be supported by a written justification other than the employee's most recent rating of record.

2.5.3.2 OTS Award nominations shall be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.6 Time-Off Award (TOA)

2.6.1 Definition

A TOA is an award that takes the form of paid time off from work, without charge to leave, for performance as reflected in the most recent rating of record or for a specific accomplishment and to reward an employee's performance that has exceeded expectations as a one-time occurrence.

2.6.2 Eligibility

Any Federal civilian employee may receive a TOA, either as an individual or member of a group. Volunteers, contract employees, and members of the military services may not receive TOAs. See 2.6.4.6 for Presidential appointees and 2.6.5 for astronauts.

2.6.3 Requirements

2.6.3.1 A customer, peer, or supervisor may recommend an employee for a TOA, but only the immediate supervisor or manager of the employee may grant the TOA.

2.6.3.2 Supervisors and managers may recommend an award across organizational boundaries when an employee has made contributions outside his/her parent organization; however, only the employee's immediate supervisor can actually grant the award, since this action impacts salary dollars.

2.6.3.3 TOAs may be granted in amounts of eight to 80 hours for a single contribution and up to a total of 80 hours of time off during a leave year for a full-time employee.

2.6.3.4 TOAs shall be used to recognize a variety of employee contributions. Primarily, it is intended to recognize employee(s)' contribution(s) of a specific accomplishment or to reward an employee's performance that has exceeded expectations as a one-time, non-recurring nature. It may also be used to recognize a continuous improvement of a process, product, program, or service. Types of contributions an employee must make in order to be eligible for a TOA:

- a. Making a high-quality contribution involving a difficult or important project or assignment.
- b. Producing an exceptionally high-quality product under a tight deadline.
- c. Displaying special initiative and skill in completing a quality assignment or project significantly ahead of the deadline while maintaining quality and other task requirements.
- d. Performing an added or emergency assignment in addition to regular duties.
- e. Using initiative and creativity in making improvements in a product, activity, program, or service.
- f. Providing outstanding customer service to clients or colleagues that is highly responsive, courteous, respectful, and exceeds expectations.
- g. Exercising initiative by taking action to plan, perform, and follow through with a task that benefits his/her office without prompting or direction from others.
- h. Independently taking action to promote a safe working environment.

i. Sustaining a high level of performance for an extended period as reflected, for example, in a rating of record.

2.6.3.5 A TOA should be presented as soon as possible after the completion of the act or service for which the nomination is made.

2.6.3.6 TOA award nominations shall be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.6.4 Restrictions

2.6.4.1 If illness occurs during time-off leave, sick leave may be granted for the period of incapacitation.

2.6.4.2 The following are examples in which a TOA may not be an appropriate incentive: (Please consult with your Human Resources Office for guidance.)

a. The employee has been awarded a total of 80 hours of time off within the current leave year.

b. The employee has use-or-lose and/or restored leave, annually.

c. The employee will not be able to use the TOA due to project commitments.

d. There are problems with the employee's attendance and leave, i.e., leave abuse, failure to follow leave procedures, or unexcused or unauthorized absence.

e. TOAs are not to be a substitute form of compensation for overtime work that should be directly compensated through paid overtime or compensatory time off.

2.6.4.3 Under no circumstances will a TOA be converted into a cash payment upon separation from Federal service.

2.6.4.4 A TOA will be available for use after the number of hours awarded appear on the Leave and Earnings Statement.

2.6.4.5 Presidential appointees with Senate confirmation, non-career appointees in SES positions, and Schedule C appointees may not receive a TOA during Presidential election periods, which is any period beginning June 1 in a calendar year in which the popular election of a President occurs and ending on January 20 following the date of such election. At all other times, these individuals are not prohibited from receiving TOAs.

2.6.4.6 A TOA should be taken within a reasonable time period, usually 12 months of the date of the award. The employee should be encouraged and permitted to use the incentive in a timely manner.

2.6.4.7 TOAs are not transferable from one Federal Agency to another, but they shall be transferable from one NASA Center to another. To avoid the loss of a TOA, the employee should be encouraged and allowed to use the incentive before transferring to another Federal agency.

2.6.4.8 Since a TOA is not annual leave, TOA balances cannot be transferred to approved leave recipients under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program.

2.6.4.9 While there is no specific restriction on the maximum value of combined time off and monetary awards for Special Act or Service Awards, Centers shall remain sensitive to the perceptions that could arise from combining large TOAs with substantial cash

awards, particularly in the case of statutory limits, such as the \$10,000 limitation placed on individual awards. The combined cash value should be an amount appropriate for the accomplishment.

2.6.4.10 Centers shall establish the level of management approval for granting more than four workdays off.

2.6.4.11 All TOA nominations are to be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

2.6.5 The following pertains to TOAs for civilian astronauts:

2.6.5.1 The Director of Flight Crew Operations at the Johnson Space Center is delegated the authority to approve TOAs for civilian astronauts returning from spaceflight missions.

2.6.5.2 Up to eight hours time off may be granted for each weekend day and Federal holiday that the crewmember was in space, up to a maximum of 160 hours.

2.6.5.3 No more than one TOA may be granted within a 12-month period.

2.6.5.4 TOAs may not be converted to cash and must be taken within 12 months of the date of the award.

2.6.5.5 TOAs must be properly documented in advance.

2.6.5.6 All TOA nominations for civilian astronauts are to be submitted and approved through the NAAS.

| [TOC](#) | [Preface](#) | [Chapter1](#) | [Chapter2](#) | [Chapter3](#) | [Chapter4](#) |
[Chapter5](#) | [Chapter6](#) | [AppendixA](#) | [AppendixB](#) | [ALL](#) |

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